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## THE WILL TO DOUBT

*The Will to Doubt* is a masterly essay in philosophy written by one who is evidently thoroughly at home in philosophic thinking.<sup>1</sup> It is written from the general philosophical position of pragmatism, but the author is evidently no mere disciple of any man but an original and independent thinker. He aims to appeal to the general reader as well as the student of philosophy, and there is a freshness and individuality about his style that is attractive; but the discussion is too fundamental and abstract, and the reasoning too close, and the philosophical view-point too new to allow the book to be of great value to any but the trained student.

Professor Lloyd opens his discussion by pointing out that we are all universal doubters; that consciousness means tension, instability, or doubt in its very nature; that habit which seeks fixity in growing experience must necessarily be accompanied by doubt; that doubt deepens experience and brings a man into closer fellowship with nature and with his fellows.

When we come to examine our experience we find it shot through with contradictions. Our ordinary view of life with its conception of reality, and its division of the spiritual and the material, of nature and freedom, of God and devil, law and miracle, one and many, time and space, cause and effect, is a nest of contradictions. And the views of critical science are no better. Science would be objective, specialistic, agnostic, and yet, could it succeed in its own ideals it would commit suicide. And objective science is purely formal and without value for life.

But this universality of doubt does not lead the modern doubter to the position of the older agnostics, nor even to such a conception of the Absolute as Bradley reaches in his *Appearance and Reality*; since for the philosophy of pragmatism, with its mediating, instrumental view of knowledge and intelligence, doubt has real value in life. We are saved by our doubts instead of, or at least as well as, by our faith; for contradiction shows the failure of any concept to give an adequate view of a dynamic experience. The contradiction manifests, as it were, a cross-section of experience and is an effective correction of the narrowness, relativity, or one-sidedness of our concepts. Thus while our ordinary or scientific views of life may be inconsistent in themselves these very contradictions may work together to give real information of reality, and work for truth. Contradiction is only difference at its greatest limit, and difference marks an indwelling unity,

<sup>1</sup> *The Will to Doubt. An Essay in Philosophy for the General Thinkers.* By Alfred H. Lloyd. New York: Macmillan, 1908. 285 pages. \$1.25 net.

so that doubt manifests the unity and realistic character of experience. Contradiction makes experience realistic, practical, and social.

So the doubter comes to believe through his doubts and in the very things he doubts. He finds "reality without finality" in all things. "There is reality in all things. Reality is without form or residence, real as spirit, not as a programme. There is nothing finally or fixedly real in itself, and yet all things are working together for what is real." The doubter's world is the scene of a "constant evolution which we may call God or nature as we please." "God and men are active parties to one and the same life." "The conflicts of human life are the perfection, the living perfection of God." "God is, nay, God's life is not what some but what all men do. And the doubter's world is just the world, the world of things always relative, the world of constant conflict in which alone this can be true." "Truth hath neither visible form nor body; it is without habitation or name; like the Son of man it hath not where to lay its head," is the constant refrain of the book.

But if God is identified with nature, the latter is "no unprofitable mechanism, always doing the same thing" but an ever-developing, ever-producing reality, serving an end larger and deeper than any known law. *The law is never a law*, and the whole cannot be conceived of after the analogy of a part. There is perfect sympathy between the spiritual and the material and both work together for reality and are means to the one end.

In the doubter's world there is a place for genuine individuality and even for immortality. No one person can have worth in himself, but he is not unreal for being dependent upon others. Reality is itself dependent upon an infinite multiplicity of differences, and it is this fact which gives the individual a chance for real worth and value since he can contribute to reality. And it is only as he works with others to produce a life that is real and true that he comes to possess an individuality or to partake in immortality. Only reality has immortality.

In a recent issue of this *Journal* there appeared from the pen of a prominent theologian a discussion of the relation of ethics to religion based upon a conception of reality similar to the one given in this book.<sup>2</sup> And it is surely a fundamental question for the religious thinker of today whether the philosophy of pragmatism is the friend or enemy of the Christian faith. Pragmatism is a new movement in philosophy and it gives this volume great interest to the religious student because Professor Lloyd seeks to give its religious value and to interpret some of the essential ideals of Christianity

<sup>2</sup> "Can Christianity Ally Itself with Monistic Ethics?" By Frank Thilly, in *American Journal of Theology*, October, 1908, p. 547.

in harmony with his philosophic thinking. There is yet considerable uncertainty as to the religious value of this system of thought. Does this uncertainty arise, in part, from its dynamic conception of reality and the instrumental idea of thought according to which reality can never be conceived of as a system, or from the difficulty of the reader to adjust himself to its view-point and categories, or that it has not, as yet, worked out with clearness its own position in the different realms of experience?

Does its identification of God and nature impoverish God while it enriches nature? Is the reality of pragmatism rich enough to be the Father of Jesus? Is the conception of immortality presented in this book, according to which our friends "live in us and we in them much as our past selves, our infancy and youth, are alive with us and in us today" rich enough to be the hope of the brother whom Jesus has led into fellowship with his Father? And if not which produces the truer and higher life, the faith of Jesus or the philosophy of pragmatism? For pragmatism can have reality only as it can produce a life that is real and true.

W. C. KEIRSTEAD

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#### GOD AS INFINITE BENEVOLENCE

As the writer says, *The Infinite Affection*<sup>1</sup> is an "attempt to bring together, in related order and within a brief compass, statements of our ancient faith in modern form and language and with present-day emphasis." Although he would undoubtedly disclaim so ambitious a project, Dr. Macfarland may be said to undertake here a reconstruction of the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology in the light of modern thought. If he makes little parade of scientific terminology and the current catch-words of philosophy, it is because he not simply speaks but thinks in terms of evolution, immanence, and "identity in difference." Hence while there is little obvious adjustment there is much illuminating interpretation in the book and throughout it is pervaded by a fine spirit of devotion. The personality of Jesus, shown in word and action, is held to be the supreme authority for Christian thought and practice. Jesus is divine because he is the perfect revelation of the will and character of God. In him God's moral nature is fully revealed as infinite affection: This quality most completely expresses God's character, and all other attributes must be regarded as but determinations of it. The question whether such a conception of the divinity of Christ distinguishes him in kind or only in degree

<sup>1</sup> *The Infinite Affection*. By Charles S. Macfarland. New York: The Pilgrim Press; London: James Clarke & Co., 1907. 174 pages.